

SITE NUMBER: WA-IV-125

ADDRESS: 21 West Water Street, Smithsburg, MD

OWNER/LOT NUMBER/ACCESS: Town of Smithsburg, 595/145, public access

BUILDING DATE: late 19th/early 20th century

21 West Water Street is a massive, frame, freestanding structure currently used as the Smithsburg Town Hall. The building holds offices for the mayor and the local police, as well as meeting rooms, and the Smithsburg Historical Society.

It is a north-facing, deep, symmetrical, two-and-a-half-story, four-bay, structure whose three-story projecting square tower is a visual landmark as one enters Smithsburg from the west. The building has been extensively cosmetically altered, but still retains building elements that gives clues to how it appeared in the past. The structure is sheathed in asbestos shingling and rests on a stone foundation. The mansard roof is covered with an artificial roll. The principal entrance is protected by an intact, three-bay, eastlake porch and consists of a set of replacement double doors. A secondary entrance is located in the tower projection. The fenestration consists of pairs of windows on the front facade and single windows on the side elevations. All windows are rectangular, wooden sash, double-hung, one-over-one (front) or two-over-two (side) windows. Windows in the third floor of the tower have been boarded up.

The building is set on parts of original lots 26 and 27, vacant lots that were owned by Robert Gordon and Radarick [sic] Shepley, respectively, according to the 1814 plat of the town. No building appears on the site, then owned by B.C. Bishop, on the 1875 map either. However, the extant building does appear on the 1916 and 1923 Sanborns as 34 Water Street. These maps indicate

- that the first floor of the building contained a dwelling, the second floor contained the opera house, and the third floor contained lodge rooms.

The building is within the Western Maryland Geographic Organization, the Development Period of Industrial/Urban Dominance, and falls within the Historic Period Themes of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Community Planning; and Social/Education/Cultural.

Prepared by Julie Mueller, April 1991

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN:

STATEWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT

Geographic Organization: Western Maryland

Chronological/Development Periods: Industrial/Urban Dominance

Historic Period Themes: Social/Educational/Cultural; and
Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: buildings

Historic Environment: small, rural town

Historic Function and Use: civic and social

Known Design Source: unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. WA-IV-125

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Smithsburg Town Hall

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 21 West Water Street

☐ not for publication

city, town Smithsburg

☐ vicinity of

congressional district

state Maryland

county Washington

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Lodge

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Town of Smithsburg

street & number 21 West Water Street

telephone no.:

city, town Smithsburg

state and zip code Maryland 21783

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Washington County Courthouse liber 595

street & number Summit Avenue and West Washington Street folio 145

city, town Hagerstown

state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Survey No. WA-IV-125

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Setting

21 West Water Street is a massive frame, freestanding structure currently used as the Smithsburg Town Hall (Washington County). Located directly at the public-right-of-way, the building takes up most of its 65.5' x 169' lot (595/145). The building is sited on Smithsburg's principal east-west thoroughfare along a residential strip of freestanding frame dwellings, most of which were constructed during the late 19th and early 20th century.

Exterior

21 West Water Street is a north-facing, deep, symmetrical, two-and-a-half story, four-bay, structure whose three-story projecting square tower is a visual landmark as one enters Smithsburg from the west. The building has been extensively cosmetically altered, but still retains building elements that gives clues to how it appeared in the past. The structure is sheathed in asbestos shingling and rests of a stone foundation. The mansard roof is covered with an artificial roll. The principal entrance is protected by an intact, three-bay, eastlake porch and consists of a set of replacement double doors. The secondary entrance is located in the tower projection. The fenestration consists of pairs of windows on the front facade and single windows on the side elevations. All windows are rectangular, wooden sash, double-hung, one-over-one (front) or two-over-two (side) windows. Windows on the third floor of the tower have been boarded up.

Interior

The first floor of the Town Hall can be divided into two sections--the front half holding the police and mayor's offices and the back half housing the Smithsburg Historical Society. The front half has been altered with the addition of modern partitions and paneling. A center hall divides the mayor's office from the police station. The hall also has two restrooms leading off of it. The Historical Society headquarters are located in one large room. There is a small office for the Society at the back of the building in a rear addition. The first floor also has an enclosed stairwell along the east elevation that leads up to the second and third floors. The second floor houses the council rooms in the front and a stage area, kitchen and restrooms in the rear. The third floor houses the masonic lodge.

A cellar under the rear addition provides a view of the original rear elevation of the building and its original shiplap siding. There is a partial basement dug out under the main structure.

8. Significance

Survey No. WA-IV-125

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Bet. 1893-1896 **Builder/Architect** Excelsior Hall Improvement Co.

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The current Town Hall of Smithsburg has served a variety of uses over its history, including its original function as an opera house and lodge. Today, the building holds offices for the mayor and the local police, as well as meeting rooms, and the Smithsburg Historical Society. Based on the French Second Empire style of the structure, as well as indications in the tax records, the structure was erected between 1893 and 1896.

The Town Hall is set of parts of original lots 26 and 27--vacant lots that were owned by Robert Gordon and Radarick (sic) Shepley, respectively, in 1814. The site remained devoid of structures for much of the 19th century, but may have been farmed or filled with orchards. According to the 1877 map of the town, the still vacant site was owned by B.C. Bishop at that time. Deeds indicate that B.C. Bishop was probably Benjamin Bishop who may have been a brother or uncle of Emily Bishop, a renown artist of her time (see WA-IV-204). In 1892, Benjamin deeded this land to Emily and her sisters, Lucy and Susan. The following year the land was sold to the Excelsior Hall Improvement Company of Smithsburg whose intention it was to erect an opera house. According to available county tax records, the building was built between 1893 and 1896, when it is listed on the tax record as a \$2300 improvement. Known as Excelsior Hall, it may have been the only opera house or entertainment hall in Smithsburg. Both the 1916 and 1923 Sanborns indicate that the structure housed a dwelling on the first floor, an opera house on the second, and lodge rooms on the third. Whether this combination of functions was the original intent of the Excelsior Hall Company is not known. Apparently, the Company did not succeed, defaulted on their loan in 1907, and sold the building to Allan and Reuben Smith in 1915.

(continued...)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. WA-IV-125

See attached sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .25Quadrangle name Smithsburg, MDQuadrangle scale 7.5UTM References do NOT complete UTM referencesA

Zone			Easting				Northing		

B

Zone			Easting				Northing		

C

Zone			Easting				Northing		

D

Zone			Easting				Northing		

E

Zone			Easting				Northing		

F

Zone			Easting				Northing		

G

Zone			Easting				Northing		

H

Zone			Easting				Northing		

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julianne Mueller

organization

date

July 1991street & number 2730 Ordway Street, N.W.telephone 202-364-6594city or town Washington, D.C.

state

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Page 8.1

The Smith brothers may have continued to have the building serve its social functions, if the 1916 and 1923 Sanborns are correct. However, the Smithsburg Historical Society claims that the building housed a textile mill and that it may never have been used as an opera house. In 1925, the Smith brothers sold the building to the Eader family, who in turn sold it to the Smithsburg Community Association in 1926. The deed notes the structure as "the former Excelsior Hall." The building had been divided into many apartments which were removed when the building was converted into civic use. The addition to the building containing the office on the ground floor and the stage, kitchen, and restroom on the second floor was erected shortly after the building's purchase by the Community Association.

Today, the building houses the Smithsburg municipal offices, the police station, lodge rooms, and the Smithsburg Historical Society and is known as the Town Hall.

The chain of title was traced to 1892.

February 9, 1892 (98/249), Deed from Benjamin Bishop to Emily, Lucy, and Susan Bishop

May 9, 1893 (100/398), Deed from George Pearson, Attorney for Emily, Lucy and Susan Bishop, to Excelsior Hall Improvement Co. of Smithsburg for the sum of \$300

July 2, 1907 (126/426), Deed from Henry Keedy, Attorney for mortgage default to Excelsior Hall Co. of Smithsburg for the sum of \$2800 "...following described real estate...improved by a large frame building known as Excelsior Hall..."

July 7, 1915 (147/200), Deed from Excelsior Hall Company of Smithsburg to Allan C. and Reuben W. Smith for the sum of \$3300

March 17, 1925 (170/660), Deed from Allan C. Smith and Chester and Susan Brandenburg to John and Flora Eader for the sum of \$10

October 21, 1926 (175/420), Deed from John and Flora Eader to Smithsburg Community Association Inc. for the sum of \$8000 "...being formerly known as the Excelsior Hall..."

May 12, 1975 (595/145), Deed from the Smithsburg Community Association, Inc. to the Town of Smithsburg for the sum of \$1

Significance

A preliminary architectural evaluation of the Town Hall was made in January 1991 by Julianne Mueller during a survey of Smithsburg. At that time a survey site number WA-IV-125 was assigned and it was determined that the structure is a contributing element to Smithsburg's historic social and architectural character. A summary sheet on the building with photographs was submitted to the Maryland Historical Trust in May 1991. The summary provides a basic description of the building and places it with the Maryland

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Page 8.2

Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan: State Historic Context (Western Maryland Geographic Organization; the Development Period of Industrial/Urban Dominance; the Historic Period Themes of Social/Educational/Cultural; and Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning).

Upon the suggestion of the Smithsburg Historical Society, the general history of the Town Hall was researched. It was concluded that the building served an important social role during the town's 20th century history, is an altered (though reversible) example of French Second Empire architecture, and meets the following eligibility criteria (A and C) for listing on the Maryland Register.

Criterion A -- The property is associated with significant historical events. This building served as a social and civic center for Smithsburg for much of the 20th century.

Criterion B -- The property is not associated with a significant person.

Criterion C -- The building exhibits exceptional architectural design, method of construction, or craftsmanship, or is the product of a trained architect. The building has been cosmetically altered over the years. However, the basic interior and exterior fabric of the building is intact and could be rehabilitated. Despite its alterations, the Town Hall is a contributing element to the architectural significance of Smithsburg. Because of the alterations, however, the building would not qualify as an individual landmark.

Criterion D -- The property may provide important information about history or prehistory. The property has not been assessed for its archeological potential. It is possible that 20th-century archeological remains might be found near the building.

CONTINUATION SHEET

SURVEY NO. WA-IV-125

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Page 9.1

Smithsburg Historical Society, photographic files

Washington County Deeds and Tax Records

MAPS:

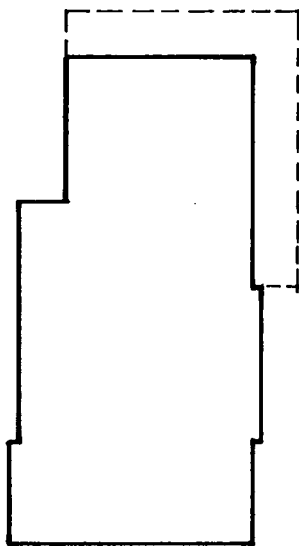
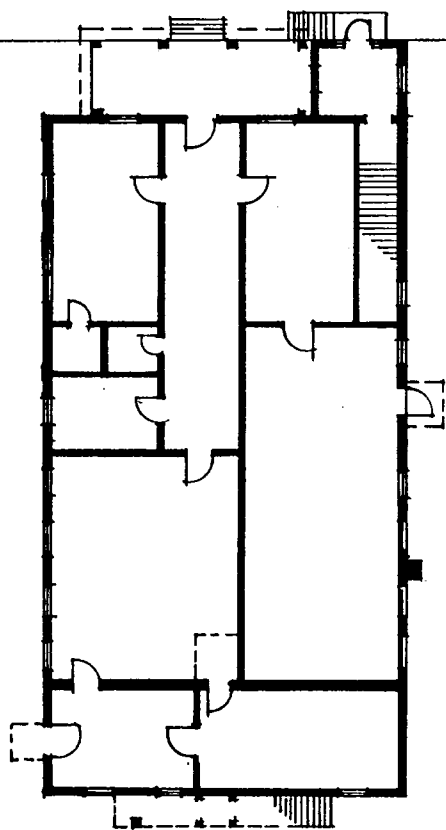
1814 Plat of the town

1877 town map

1916 Sanborn

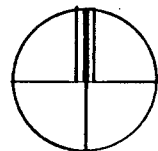
1923 Sanborn Map

WEST WATER STREET



MAPLE AVENUE

not to scale

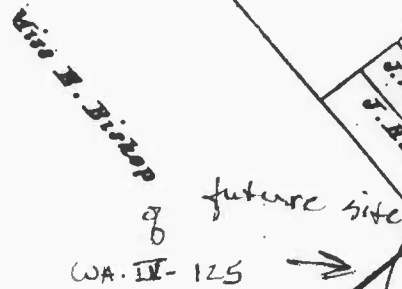




Community House and West Water Street, Smithsburg, Md.

WA-IV-125 1930s?

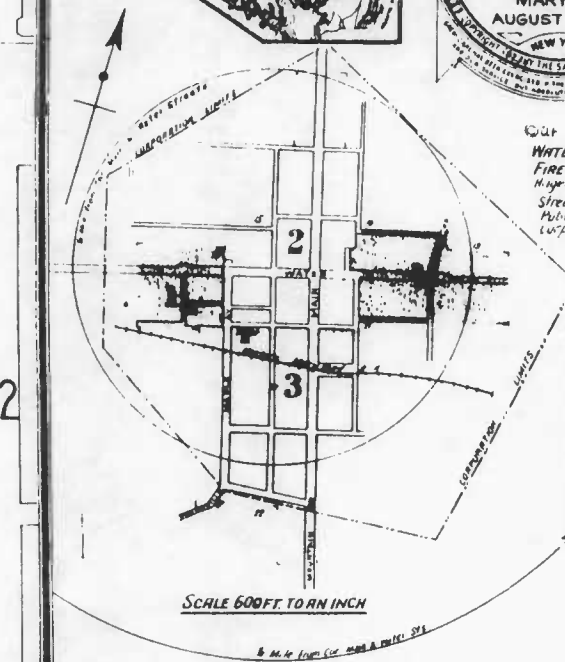
WA-IV-125





WATER WA. IV. 125

MAPLE AV.



SCALE 600 FT. TO AN INCH

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High School



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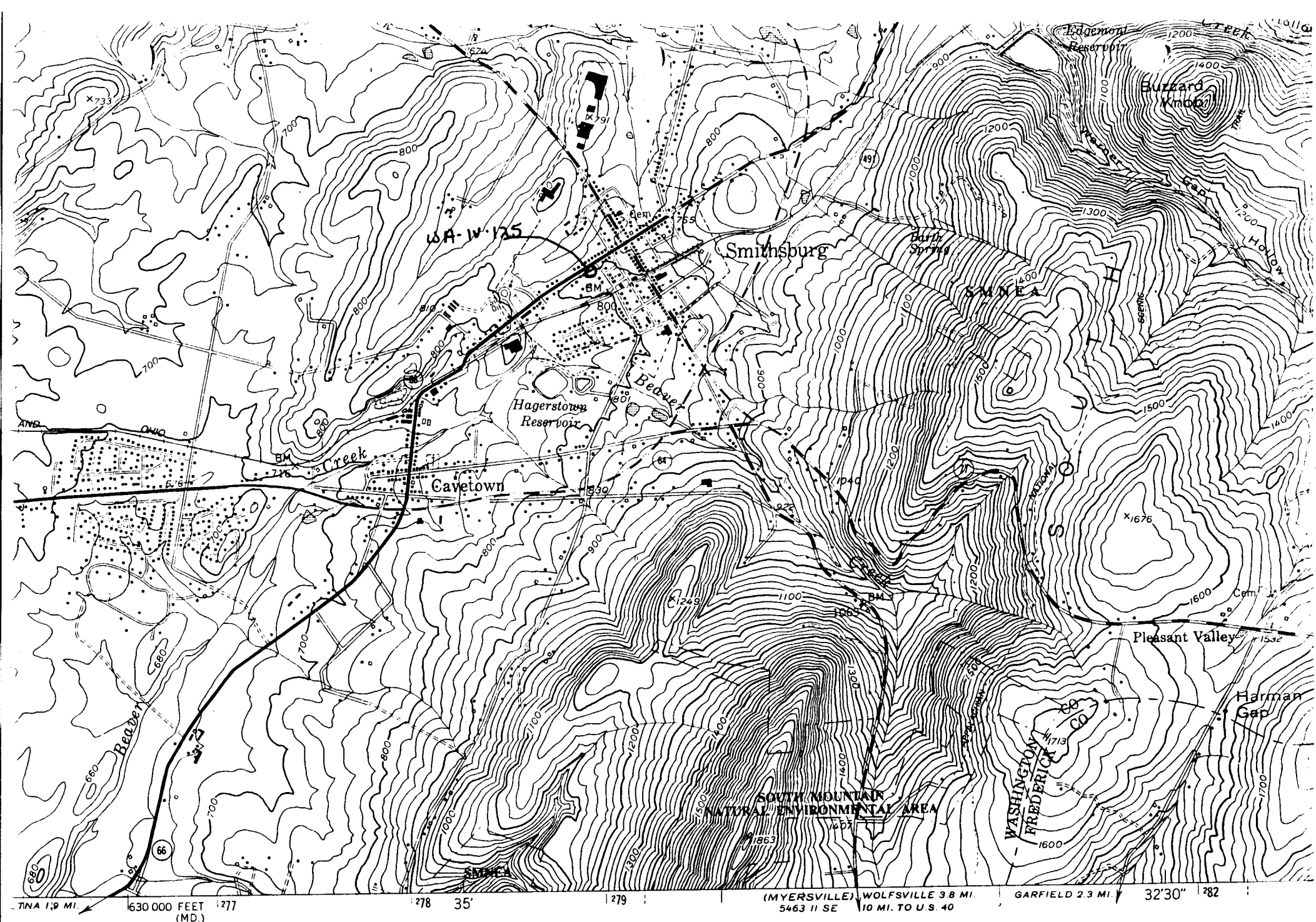
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WATER FACILITIES: None
FIRE DEPT: None Help given by
Hagerstown Fire Dept. No fire limits
Streets not paved grades level
Public lights electric by private
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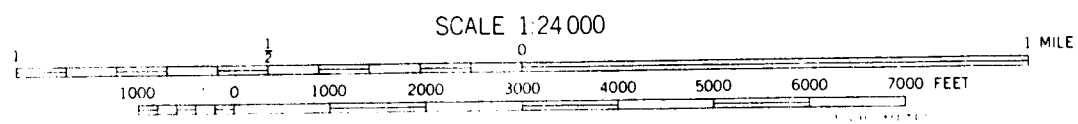
INDEX

SPECIALS		on rent	8	page
H				
High School,	3	St. Ann's Episcopal Church,	2	
		Stoner Sawyer, J., Wood Pile, &c.,	1	



Topographical Survey

from aerial





BSA
TROOP 14

PARKING
FOR
VISITORS
ONLY

NO
VEHICLES
WILL BE
TOWED AWAY
AT OWNER'S
EXPENSE

WA-1U-125

7/1991

J. Mueller

S. elev.



WA-10-125

7/1991

J. Mueller

E. elev.



WA-1V-125

7/1991

J. Muddle

W. elev.



WA-IV-125

7/1991

J. Mueller

N + W elev.



